

# Nova Scotia Department of Health

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## **Subject: Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy *Co-operative Learning Experience Program***

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**Effective date:** March 2009  
**Review date:** March 2011

**Approved by:** Original signed by Donna Denney  
Nursing Policy Advisor

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### **I. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Nova Scotia Department of Health is committed to addressing the health human resource requirements for a quality health care system. The Nova Scotia Department of Health supports *Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy, April 2001*, and is committed to the implementation of initiatives identified in that document.

The Department will support the Co-operative Learning Experience Program for eligible nursing students participating in university undergraduate nursing programs in Nova Scotia. The Co-operative Learning Experience Program is not just a work experience, but an opportunity for learning and reflection on nursing.

### **II. DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 Co-operative Learning Experience: An employment experience designed for students to integrate theoretical learning with practical application within an employer-employee relationship.
- 2.2 Preceptor: A pre-selected, trained and experienced nurse (preceptor) who partners with a student or new employee (learner) to assist them in acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes required to function effectively in the workplace<sup>1</sup>.

### **III. POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 3.1 support nursing students in developing practical skills
- 3.2 provide an opportunity for nursing students to better understand the role and responsibilities of nurses
- 3.3 introduce students to a range of practice options
- 3.4 promote integration of students into the workplace culture
- 3.5 provide an opportunity for nursing students to experience an employment relationship in the health care system
- 3.6 increase the likelihood that new graduates will remain in the province, especially in rural areas
- 3.7 decrease future workplace orientation costs

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<sup>1</sup> Nova Scotia Provincial Preceptor Program (2004)

#### **IV. APPLICATION**

This policy applies to:

- 4.1 Third-year students in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Programs at Dalhousie University, St. Francis Xavier University, and Cape Breton University
- 4.2 Eligible employers including District Health Authorities (DHAs); IWK Health Centre; and Long Term Care facilities funded by the Department of Health

#### **V. POLICY DIRECTIVES**

##### **5.1 Employer Responsibilities**

- 5.1.1 Employers are responsible for identifying potential Cooperative learning experiences available in their facility and/or agency and, where possible, matching students to sites based on student learning objectives.
- 5.1.2 Eligibility criteria for preceptors will be determined by the employer (health care institution).
- 5.1.3 Individual employers will be responsible for identification of potential preceptors based on eligibility criteria.
- 5.1.4 The employer will be responsible for the provision of preceptor orientation and training to define their tasks and expectations.
- 5.1.5 The employer will be responsible for the provision of nursing student employee orientation.
- 5.1.6 Selected preceptors will be responsible for ensuring that experiences contribute to the achievement of student learning objectives and that a student evaluation is completed and provided to the university.
- 5.1.7 Nursing student employee benefits will be administered by the employer as per the Labour Standards Code and the Pay and Benefits Guidelines (Appendix I).
- 5.1.8 The employer will complete a letter of appointment outlining the terms and conditions of employment as per 5.1.6.
- 5.1.9 The employer will be responsible for completing a report (Appendix II) and appending it to an invoice for billing the Department of Health for eligible and appropriate costs as outlined in section 5.3.1. This report must be submitted to the Department no later than September 15 each year.

##### **5.2 University Responsibilities**

- 5.2.1 Eligibility criteria for nursing students will be determined by the university (educational institution).
- 5.2.2 The university will be responsible for informing the student population about the Co-operative Learning Experience Program and providing encouragement and support in the application process.
- 5.2.3 The university will assist the students in considering and developing their personal learning objectives.
- 5.2.4 The university will be responsible for the selection of students based on the eligibility criteria and the number of positions predetermined as per 5.3.1.
- 5.2.5 The university will be responsible for negotiating appropriate employment settings and for making Co-operative Learning Experience Guidelines available to employers.

- 5.2.6 The university will be responsible for identifying a “contact person” who will be available during the planning process and throughout the employment period. The contact person will be responsible for facilitating problem resolution for the duration of the Co-operative Learning Experience Program.
- 5.2.7 The university will be responsible for completing an evaluation and submitting the evaluation to the Nursing Policy Advisor and employers.
- 5.3 Nursing Policy Advisor Responsibilities
- 5.3.1 The Nursing Policy Advisor will be responsible for the determination of the following on a yearly basis:
- the number of positions from each eligible educational institution for which funding will be provided by the Department
  - the hourly rate of pay
  - the length of the program, including the number of weeks, average hours per week, as well as minimum and maximum number of hours required
- 5.3.2 The Nursing Policy Advisor will be responsible for providing to the university and employer, in writing, information as per 5.3.1.
- 5.3.3 The Nursing Policy Advisor will work with universities and employers to ensure to the extent possible:
- geographic distribution of students
  - appropriate mix among acute care, mental health, and long term care service areas at a level appropriate to students who have completed third year in the nursing program
  - Unfilled Co-operative seats are renegotiated in an appropriate manner

## **VI. POLICY GUIDELINES**

- 6.1 To support the placement of students in rural areas of the province, the Nursing Policy Advisor, Department of Health, will work with employers to identify, to the extent possible, non-transferable co-operative placement positions in rural areas. Selection criteria will include facilities that:
- Have previously had difficulty attracting students and preceptor supports
  - Have a well-developed succession plan
  - Are anticipating above-average retirement rates
- 6.2 The Nursing Policy Advisor will participate in the Department of Health Business Planning process and make recommendations that support the Co-operative Learning Experience Program. Recommendations will be based on a yearly review of program results and priorities within the Nursing Strategy.

## **VII. ACCOUNTABILITIES**

- 7.1 The university and the employer (health care institution) are responsible for the implementation of the program according to Departmental policy in support of policy objectives.

## **VIII. MONITORING**

- 8.1 Participating universities are responsible for evaluation of the Co-operative Learning Experience Program and reporting on the educational benefits for students, preceptors, and agency administrators to the Department of Health and employers.
- 8.2 The Nursing Policy Advisor is responsible for monitoring policy implementation.
- 8.3 The Nursing Policy Advisor is responsible for monitoring effectiveness of program on students' transition into the workforce.

## **IX. ENQUIRIES**

All enquiries relating to the interpretation and application of this policy should be referred to:

Nursing Policy Advisor	Phone: 424-0122
Department of Health	Fax: 424-6690
P.O. Box 488	E-mail: <a href="mailto:NursingStrategy@gov.ns.ca">NursingStrategy@gov.ns.ca</a>
Halifax, NS B3J 2R8	

## **X. APPENDICES**

Appendix I: *Co-operative Learning Experience Program–Payment and Benefits Guidelines*

Appendix II: *Co-operative Learning Experience Program–Employer Report Form*